

Statement

We join in strongly recommending Dr. William Henry Welch (1850-1934) for election of the Hall of Fame for Great Americans, as he was the central figure in the development of medical education and research in America during his active lifetime. Like many great men who have not won a Nobel Prize, his work had marked influence in a wider area than the usual specialized contribution for which a Nobel award is given. Indeed, he created the milieu in medicine that made possible the execution of research of the highest order. The first three Nobel Prizes in Physiology and Medicine on this side of the Atlantic were to men who worked at one of the institutions he had launched (John Hopkins and Rockefeller Institute).

At the international celebration of Welch's 80th birthday, President Herbert Hoover (honorary head of the celebration) referred to him as "our greatest statesman in the field of public health." On that occasion, Abraham Flexner, author of the famous Carnegie Report of 1910 on Medical Education in the U.S. (wherein Welch is the first person to whom acknowledgment is made), wrote to Welch: "It is not too much to say that you have been the cornerstone of the entire development in modern medicine and public health in this country: without you, no Johns Hopkins Medical School, as we know it; no... Rockefeller Institute...and all the other great things which are outgrowths of the work you have done...I should myself have done nothing without you...and so to you is to be traced, without the slightest doubt, whatever good has been accomplished in that field by the General Education Board and the Rockefeller Foundation. I am grateful to you...beyond power of expression."

Dr. Welch responded to these warm tributes with the modest statement: "... I stand here to represent an army of...colleagues, whose work and contributions... have advanced the science and art of medicine and public health to the eminent position which they now hold in this country."

In strongly supporting the election of Dr. Welch to the Hall of Fame, we speak not only as Nobel Laureates, but also as spokesmen for this great army, of devoted men and women to whom Dr. Welch referred, and for the American people who owe so much to his inspired leadership in Medicine and Public Health.

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